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Lebanon: The Rise of the Militias as Political Actors

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A Research Paper

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Lebanon: The Rise of the Militias as Political Actors [REDACTED]

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A Research Paper

This paper was prepared by [REDACTED] of the
Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis,
with contributions from [REDACTED]

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NESA: [REDACTED]
LDA: It was coordinated with the Directorate of
Operations. [REDACTED]

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Lebanon: The Rise of the Militias as Political Actors

Summary

Information available
as of 4 January 1988
was used in this report.

Lebanon's 12-year-old civil war has all but dissolved the country's political order, and the power of sectarian militias now surpasses the government's authority. The rise of Lebanese militias pursuing anti-Western objectives guarantees that Lebanon will remain an environment hostile to US interests. The breakdown of public order will ensure that Lebanon will continue to serve as a staging base for international terrorism, smuggling, and narcotics trafficking. Moreover, Lebanon's continued agony will have dangerous spillover effects on broader Arab-Israeli and Palestinian issues.

Lebanese society is virtually dismembered and probably beyond hope of reconstitution. The fragmentation of Lebanese politics, governmental paralysis, rampant violence, the deaths of over 140,000 Lebanese in the civil war, and the ensuing civil disorder reflect the erosion of trust, loyalty, confidence, compassion, civility, and respect. The fundamental social attitudes that once bound together the disparate elements of Lebanese society and allowed the Lebanese to claim loyalty to something larger than a religious sect have collapsed.

The social, economic, and political anarchy of the civil war along with profound demographic changes has accelerated Lebanon's decomposition while nurturing the growth of the militias. Tension between the Maronite Christians and other sects—especially the Shias, who have replaced the Maronites as the country's largest sect—over the distribution of political power has been a major cause of the anarchy that has become synonymous with Lebanon. The sects that make up Lebanese society have for the most part abandoned the 1943 National Charter, which assigned government positions according to the size of each sect and enabled potentially incompatible groups to coexist as part of a larger whole.

The political consequence is the rule of guns. Groups that do not have armed militias are helpless. The massacre of Palestinian refugees at the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut in 1982 after the withdrawal of PLO fighters illustrates what can happen to Lebanese groups that lack military forces.

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In the absence of other institutions, the militia has become the dominant institution in Lebanese politics. It almost certainly will remain so. The militias, for example, have stepped in to provide services that the government can no longer provide. In addition to providing a modicum of order in an otherwise anarchic environment, militias collect trash, provide security at checkpoints between East and West Beirut, and direct traffic. ~~■~~ b3

No militia, however, has been strong enough to impose its version of the Lebanese state on its counterparts, nor is one strong enough to create an independent political entity outside the Lebanese political system. Partly in response to their dilemma as weak individual actors in a loose system, the militias ceaselessly negotiate as alliances are made, broken, remade, and rebroken to gain advantage over the opponent of the moment. Power politics is their primary tool, and ideology, religion, or affiliation with foreign patrons do not preclude alliances that advance a militia's tactical interests. ~~■~~ b3

Palestinian, Syrian, Israeli, and Iranian involvement has accelerated the polarization of Lebanese politics. Deep disagreements over the legitimacy of the Palestinian armed presence and whether and how to accommodate politically the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees helped spark the civil war in 1975 and continue to cause turmoil. The presence of tens of thousands of Syrian troops in Lebanon further undercuts the authority of the weak central government, strengthens the political position of pro-Syrian actors, and reduces the likelihood of political accommodations among Lebanese political groups. The continuing Israeli presence in southern Lebanon has had a deeply radicalizing effect on Lebanon's Shias. b3 ~~■~~

Iran is the most recent presence and may be the most explosive. Tehran sent a contingent of Revolutionary Guards to Lebanon shortly after the Israeli invasion in 1982, underscoring the commitment of the Shias' powerful ally and the emergence of a political front of fundamentalist Shias—from both Lebanon and Iran—devoted to creating an Islamic republic in Lebanon modeled on the Iranian example. ~~■~~ b3

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The presidential election scheduled for 1988 may demonstrate dramatically that the political compromise established in 1943 is defunct. Muslim militia warlords vehemently oppose the continuing Maronite occupation of the presidency. The parliamentary process by which presidents are selected will be strained and possibly paralyzed as Lebanon's sects use the electoral process to redress longstanding grievances. There is a substantial risk that militias could scuttle the selection process by preventing their coreligionist members of parliament from attending the parliament's election session. Efforts to avert electoral paralysis could easily founder on the conflicting demands of Muslim militia warlords and the unwillingness of the Christians to make substantial political concessions. ~~SECRET~~ b3

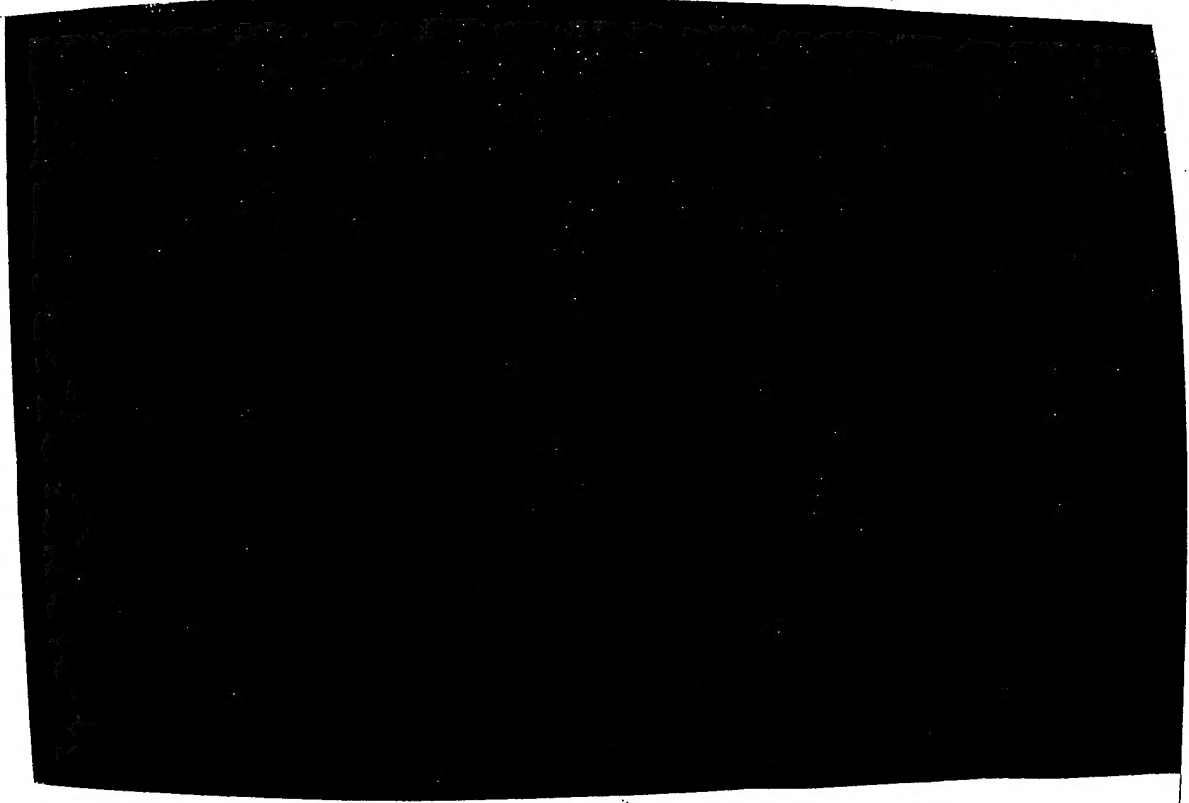
Virtually all militias view the government and the Army as just another Christian militia—an artifact of the National Charter that gave preeminence to the Christians. Lebanon's militias will equate US support for the government with support for the Christians, even if authoritative statements of US policy indicate otherwise. In addition, the vigor with which militia alliances are made and remade indicates that US involvement in Lebanon—particularly in support of the government—would be opposed by most militias. ~~SECRET~~ b3

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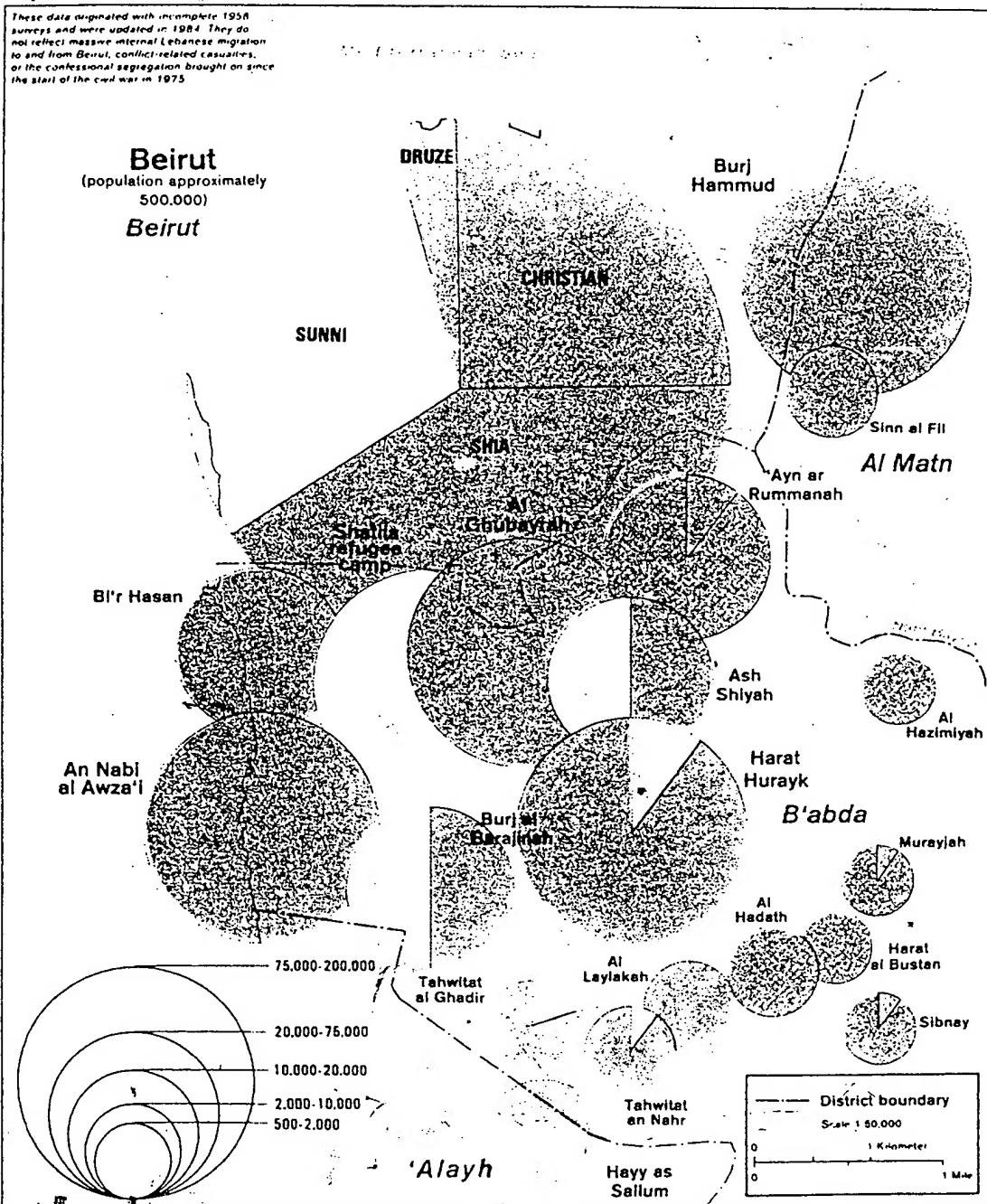
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Figure 1
Population and Religious Affiliations in Beirut and Environs

These data originated with incomplete 1958 surveys and were updated in 1984. They do not reflect massive internal Lebanese migration to and from Beirut, conflict-related casualties, or the confessional segregation brought on since the start of the civil war in 1975.



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Lebanon: The Rise of the Militias as Political Actors

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Setting the Stage for the Militias

Lebanon has always been a land of diverse religious groups, which has prevented it from developing durable national traditions or experience. The Christians, Druze, and Shias fled to the Lebanon mountains in search of a land that would allow them to retain their social distinctiveness in the midst of a Sunni Arab-dominated Middle East. Each group carved out for itself or was pushed into enclaves in which it could retain its claim to its special identity while coexisting with its neighbors. Many of Lebanon's sects have their own myths about their origins and uniqueness. The Maronites, for example, assert that they are not really Arabs but are descended from the ancient Phoenicians.

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The French, in constructing modern Lebanon, fashioned a political system that distributed authority on the basis of religious sect, while reserving primacy for the Maronite Christians who looked to France as a patron. Although that system functioned for some 30 years, most scholars agree that the system's flaws helped promote the growth of sectarian militias. The National Charter encouraged the Lebanese to define issues from a sectarian point of view rather than a national perspective and gave political legitimacy to the militias that became vehicles for sectarian grievances against the government.

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the loyalties of most Lebanese to the nation never approached the intensity of their loyalty to family, clan, and village or region.

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the National Charter's main shortcoming is its lack of provision for redistributing political power except by a census. Most Christian political leaders assert that any such census should include all overseas Lebanese, most of whom are Christian. Without an agreement on how to conduct a census, there is scant incentive for a fruitful political dialogue between the Maronites, who have the most to lose, and the other sects.

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"Lebanon is too conspicuous and successful an example of political democracy and economic liberalism to be tolerated in a region that has turned its back on both systems. It may be answered that such fears are unfounded, that the conscience of the world would not allow any harm to befall such a harmless country as Lebanon, that the neighboring world would not want to have a recalcitrant minority on their hands, and that it is in their interests to preserve Lebanon as a 'window on the West.' But, to anyone who has followed the course of national and international politics in the last 50 years, such arguments are sheer nonsense. Minorities have been effectively liquidated, windows have been violently slammed, and hardly a ripple has stirred in the conscience of the world."

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Charles Issawi, Princeton University
1966

the Maronites' solution has been to avoid the reapportionment issue, with the result that the government has become as much an observer as a participant in Lebanese politics. For more than a decade following the civil war of 1958, the Lebanese Christians ignored demographic issues, but today's confrontational environment makes this approach impossible. Given their plurality, we believe the Shias—and their militias—will play the leading role in determining Lebanon's future. Their political awakening, in response to a new generation of charismatic clerics preaching political activism and the call of the Iranian revolution, means that they will resist even minimal Christian authority.

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Lebanon's National Charter

The semiformal Lebanese National Charter (Mithaq al-Watani) of 1943 preceded formal independence and the national constitution by some three years. This was no coincidence. The important political issues were worked out in a gentlemen's agreement about how to divide political power among Lebanon's religious communities. In retrospect, it seems likely that, without such an agreement, the constitution would have been made irrelevant by the wrangling that would have arisen over who got what.

The National Charter specified that the Maronite Christians would receive the office of President; the Sunnis would receive the office of Prime Minister; the Shias would receive the office of Speaker of Parliament; and the Druze would receive the position of Minister of Defense and other important portfolios. Seats in the parliament are divided similarly among the major Lebanese sects. The appointment of Adil Usayran, a Shia, as Minister of Defense under the Gemayel government marked a minor adjustment in power-sharing among the Lebanese sects, but Shia politicians and militia leaders remain deeply dissatisfied with their lot.

Dynamics of Militia Politics

Dialogue of Intimidation. The trademarks of Lebanese militia politics are amorality and violence. Car bombings, political assassinations, and hostage taking are commonplace. These acts are a crude—but effective—form of communication between militias in which unreasonable warlords are confronted with the limits of their power and induced to behave more circumspectly. In some cases, the car bombs and killings are the attempts of underlings to seize power in their own militias. In others, the goal is to eliminate recalcitrant opponents from another militia.

The salient characteristic of the militia political system is the absence of a central authority. No actor—even the government—is strong enough to impose consensus, nor can any two or three actors working together bring about a functioning national political order.

The Last Vestige of Nationalism: The Army

Lebanon's Army, at least in the view of Commanding General Michel Awn, is the last working national institution. The fragmentation of the Army in 1983, when many Muslim soldiers—particularly Shias—deserted at the direction of militia leader Nabih Barri, illustrated the Army's susceptibility to the same kind of social pressures that had splintered the country. Awn has worked to represent all of Lebanon's sects in the Army, but he has been forced into political contortions to maintain the illusion that he has succeeded:

- *Between one-third and one-half of the Army payroll goes to soldiers who perform no visible duties and who are only nominally in military service.*
- *Most Sunni and Shia officers meet with Awn only once a month and must make special arrangements to cross into East Beirut, where Army headquarters is located.*
- *The 6th Brigade, composed predominantly of Shias, is more responsive to direction from Shia Amal leader Nabih Barri or the Syrian military than to Awn's Army command.*
- *The 11th Brigade, composed predominantly of Druze, is more responsive to Druze leader Walid Junblatt than to Awn.*
- *The Christian brigades have been the target of proselytizing by Christian militia leader Samir Ja Ja, who is attempting to gain the loyalty of selected brigade commanders—with some success—and, we suspect, convert the Army piecemeal to an extension of his Lebanese Forces militia.*

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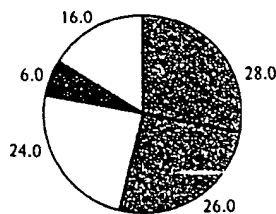
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Figure 2
Lebanon's Population,*
1979, 1983, and 1987

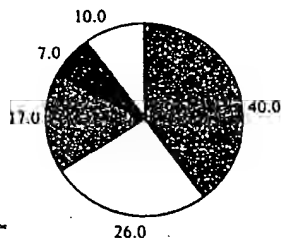
Percent

Shia Maronite Sunni
Druze Other Christian

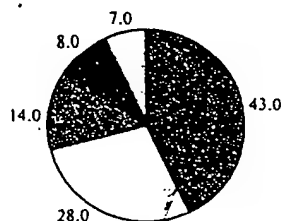
Lebanon's Population, 1979



Lebanon's Population, 1983



Lebanon's Population, 1987



* Estimated.

Hostage holding, which extends well beyond Hizballah's campaign against Americans and other Westerners, is an integral part of militia politics. With no other constraints on the behavior of their opponents, militia leaders have reverted to the ancient Middle Eastern practice of taking hostages as a means of influencing opponents. On the basis of our assessment of reports from many sources and the views of knowledgeable observers, we conclude that at least 15,000 Lebanese are held hostage by the country's militias. Each of the major militias holds as many as several hundred hostages from other confessional groups. The release of some 33 hostages by the Christian militia in East Beirut in May 1986 indicates that such practices are not limited to Muslim militias or anti-Western groups. Amal announced in 1986 that it was willing to negotiate the release of a downed Israeli airman it was holding.

Foreign Patrons. Virtually all militias have foreign patrons who supply them with weapons and attempt to use them to maintain political influence in Lebanon. Syria supports the Shia Amal organization and indirectly aids the Druze Progressive Socialist Party and several other small militias, according to the dictates of Syrian policy. Iran backs the Shia Hizballah; Iraq backs the Christian Lebanese Forces. Libya has provided financial backing to the Druze and some Nasirist groups. The Saudis give money to Christian, Druze, and Sunni groups. Israel has had contacts with the Christian, Shia, and Druze militias. The Lebanese Forces militia does not hide its ties to the United States from other Lebanese actors. The Soviet Union and Libya have provided military aid to the Druze militia and the Lebanese Communist Party militia.

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Political Assassination and Power

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Samir Ja Ja, leader of the Christian Lebanese Forces militia, is a modern version of Lebanon's traditional warlords. [REDACTED] in June 1978 he led a predawn attack planned by Bashir Gemayel against the stronghold of former President Franjiyah which resulted in the death of Franjiyah's son, his daughter-in-law, and their baby. Druze leaders hold him responsible for the massacre of scores of civilians during sectarian fighting in 1983. Several hundred Christians died during Ja Ja's struggle to oust Ili Hubayqa as Lebanese Forces chief in 1986. He engineered the assassination of the Lebanese Army's 5th Brigade commander in late 1986. [REDACTED]

Walid Junblatt, leader of the Druze Progressive Socialist Party militia, has a similarly violent history, but as a victim. Longtime observers of Lebanon recount a widely cited apocryphal tale of a meeting between Syrian President Assad and Junblatt—shortly after the assassination of Junblatt's father—that portrays Junblatt as resisting Syrian pressure. Assad pointed out to Junblatt that he was familiar with the Druze reluctance to comply with Syrian wishes. "I remember your father sitting in that chair and saying the same things," Assad said. Junblatt understood that the reference to his late father meant that he should be more pliant. [REDACTED] b3

The assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami in the spring of 1987 illustrates how the identification and punishment of assassins become an exercise in sectarianism. In our view, the affair is the best recent example of the government's inability to act. All but pro-Ja Ja sources of information have reported evidence that strongly implicated the Christian Lebanese Forces militia as being behind Karami's death. [REDACTED] b1 b3

[REDACTED] The judge appointed to investigate the murder resigned. The military commission appointed to examine the evidence refused to identify the culprits, ostensibly because they were members of the Army. An Army enlisted man suspected of planting the bomb that killed Karami fled to Sweden in July 1987. [REDACTED] b3

All Muslim militia leaders and Syria attacked the government for not bringing Karami's murderers to justice. Salim al-Huss, appointed as acting Prime Minister by President Gemayel, refused to form a new government until Karami's assassins were prosecuted. In our view, this left Gemayel unable to act without alienating Christian supporters of Karami's killers and unable to remove his administration from political limbo. [REDACTED] b3

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Plunder and Profit. Just below the surface of Lebanon's traditional economy lies another layer of unofficial services and trade that sustains economic activity. Some militias have established a civil arm that imposes taxes and provides public services. The best organized militia—the Lebanese Forces—collects trash, operates an inexpensive bus service for the Christian enclave, and in early 1987 began administering a food aid program for needy families. The Lebanese Forces also operates a small office for medical assistance and a scholarship program. [REDACTED] Hizballah has also begun a social welfare program, funded by Iran. Focusing on the Shia poor in Al Biqa' (Bekaa Valley), Hizballah provides staple foods, subsidized pharmaceuticals, and fuel oil in order to generate support for Hizballah and Iran. [REDACTED] b3

All of the major militias—for example the Lebanese Forces, the Progressive Socialist Party, Amal, and Hizballah—aggressively solicit funds from local and foreign sources. In our view, increasing competition between rival militias for funds intensifies the factional struggle and increases the irrelevancy of the state. Militia sources of revenue include:

- Fees from unofficial ports operated by the militias.
- Support from foreign patrons.
- Contributions from coreligionists at home and abroad.
- Fees collected at checkpoints throughout the country.
- Informal "taxes" imposed on local business. [REDACTED] b3

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The Lebanese Forces probably has the most sophisticated revenue system. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The system includes computerized record-keeping that helps the Christian militia to collect—or extort—taxes from businessmen, shopkeepers, and housewives. In return, the Lebanese Forces provides sanitation service and limited public works for East Beirut. [REDACTED]

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In addition, the Lebanese Forces controls several ports in the Christian enclave and leases the four most important ones to Christian entrepreneurs for large sums. Even though periodic crackdowns on smuggling by the Syrian Government cause fluctuations in the revenue the ports generate, [REDACTED]

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some 80 percent of the cargoes unloaded in this port are destined for the Syrian market. [REDACTED]

The decline of Lebanon's economy in 1986-87 has contributed mightily to the country's political predicament, lawlessness, and the rise of the militias. The militia warlords, in our view, are increasingly turning to smuggling and drug trafficking as sources of revenue. The militia ports are convenient depots for drugs and illegal arms, as well as for goods stolen from other ports. [REDACTED]

Expedient Alliances. [REDACTED]

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Militia alliances are fluid and are influenced by the changing regional interests of Lebanon's militias. [REDACTED]

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Lebanon's Strangest Bedfellows— Hizballah and the Lebanese Forces

The Christian Lebanese Forces and Shia Hizballah gain by cooperation. Both favor the overthrow of the existing order. The Lebanese Forces may already have ties to some Muslim militants. [REDACTED]

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The Lebanese Forces gave sanctuary to members of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood who fled West Beirut when the Syrians entered in strength in early 1987. [REDACTED]

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Like other Lebanese groups, Hizballah has demonstrated considerable tactical flexibility. Of all the actors in Lebanon, however, Hizballah is the most ideologically dogmatic, and we believe cooperation between Hizballah and the Christians is entirely situational. Such coordination probably would take place even while the two groups were fighting each other. The survival imperative of militia politics and the distrust of Syria by the two groups encourages their cooperation against Damascus. [REDACTED]

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Beirut: Militia City

The continuing power struggle among Lebanon's militias has transformed Beirut—once the major commercial, intellectual, and tourist center of the Arab world—into a lawless militarized zone contested by confessional and ideological factions. Turf battles, terrorism, street crime, and the lack of centralized

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Palestinians in Lebanon—Temporary Exile or New Home?

The Palestinians have been an important actor in Lebanon for the last 20 years. The number of Palestinians in the country—we estimate they compose roughly 500,000 of the Lebanese population of some 3.3 million—makes their presence important. They can be a valuable ally or a formidable enemy. Palestinian fighters have returned to Lebanon in strength. We estimate that there are 8,000 to 10,000 in the country.

Despite the military importance of the Palestinian fighters, the place of the Palestinians in the Lebanese political system is slight. In our view, many Palestinians believe that the thousands of deaths their people have suffered in Lebanon entitle them to a place in Lebanese politics. The incorporation of Palestinians into the National Charter system, an unlikely possibility at best, would be supported only by the Sunnis and is strongly opposed by most Lebanese.

The Palestinians have a stake in opposing the current regime, in preventing the emergence of a viable national authority in Lebanon, and in opposing local dominance by any one militia. They are determined to maintain a sizable presence in Lebanon:

- *Palestinian ties to Lebanon, turbulent though they are, suggest that Lebanon is an acceptable place of temporary exile.*
- *The fluid Lebanese environment helps the Palestinians achieve some of their goals. Militias, such as the Progressive Socialist Party, the Christian Lebanese Forces, and Hizballah, have aided the Palestinians in returning fighters to Lebanon and in countering Syrian influence.*

authority make the area—especially the Muslim western sector—uniquely dangerous. Beirut's lawlessness has markedly curtailed the social and economic activities of government institutions and provided sanctuary for extremists of various affiliations. The city is an open arena in which terrorists can operate without fear of being apprehended by a central state authority.

According to historians, cosmopolitan Beirut once was renowned as the meetingplace of Middle Eastern and Western culture. The Beirutis prided themselves on their sophistication and claimed with some justification that they enjoyed the best of both worlds. The conditions that made Beirut the Paris of the Middle East, however, were not rooted in the political desires or social mores of most of Lebanon's population. Beirut's tolerance arose, in large part, from its French colonial past, the cosmopolitan ethic of Lebanon's sophisticated elite, and the apathy of most Lebanese.

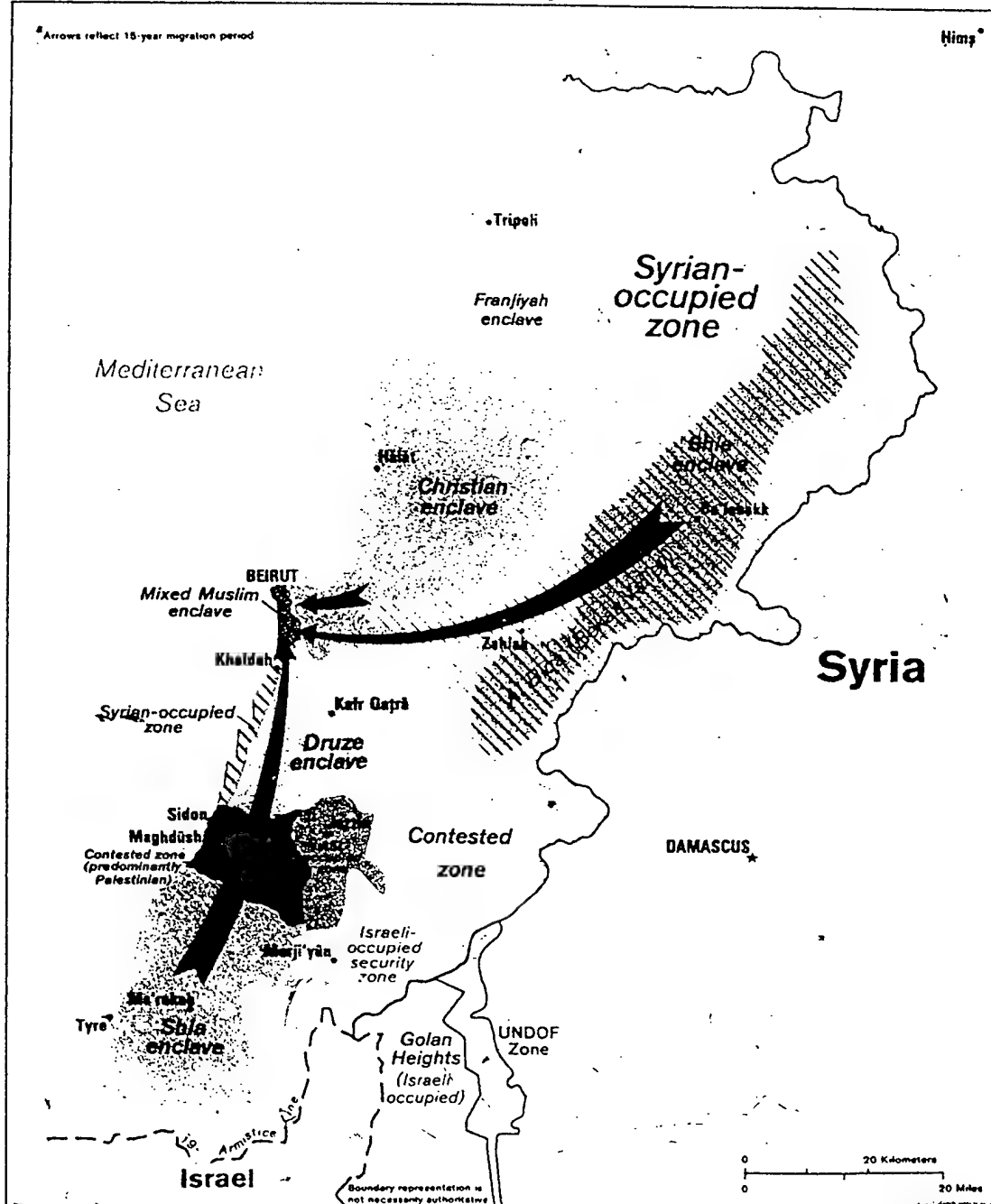
Beirut responded slowly to events elsewhere in the Middle East. In the late 1960s the arrival of Palestinians intent on using Beirut and the rest of Lebanon as a refuge and a base of operations against Israel accelerated the country's political collapse. The burgeoning Palestinian presence disrupted relations between Beirut's—and the country's—disparate religious sects. The Israeli invasions of 1978 and 1982 upset Beirut's fragile political balance as a wave of migration to West Beirut from southern Lebanon swelled the ranks of Shia militias.

Christian Rivalries in East Beirut. Christian militia leader Samir Ja Ja has used the moribund Gemayel government as his political foil to garner support for a politically independent Christian enclave. Both Ja Ja and Gemayel score victories of sorts merely by remaining alive to symbolize their respective political positions. We believe Ja Ja has been able to exploit dissension within the Lebanese Army, a continuing rivalry with Lebanese Armed Forces Commander Michel Awn (who may be positioning himself as a candidate for president), and, perversely, the Muslim accusations against the predominantly Christian Army following the assassination of Muslim Prime Minister Karami. In contrast to Ja Ja's image of dynamism, Gemayel—and to a lesser degree General Awn—appears politically fatigued.

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Figure 3
The Partition of Lebanon, December 1987, and Shia Migration to Beirut*



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Since Ja Ja and his loyalists took control of the Lebanese Forces in January 1986, the militia has emphasized Christian superiority against growing Shia Muslim strength. The Lebanese Forces has worked toward the consolidation of a Christian enclave as a safeguard against the Shia threat. Careful to avoid the term "cantonization," Ja Ja has called for the decentralization of Lebanon along the lines of the Swiss political system. b3

Ja Ja has worked to make the Christian enclave economically self-sufficient. The Lebanese Forces already controls its own ports, newspaper, and radio and television station, and Ja Ja has been pushing—so far without success—to create an international airport at Halat north of East Beirut. b3
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Christian-militia-controlled media are emphasizing the Lebanese Forces' growing involvement in public administration in an effort to highlight militia capabilities and government deficiencies. b3

The Lebanese Forces, in our judgment, is determined to achieve preeminence in Lebanon's Christian community, almost certainly at the expense of the national government. Until recently, militia leader Ja Ja and President Gemayel were linked in a partnership of convenience against Syrian influence. Ja Ja's challenge to Gemayel is tied to the 1988 presidential election and the Christian hardliner's attempts to deal from a position of strength or possibly, to enter the race. b3

Who's Who in Beirut's Factions

Group (Leader)	Affiliation	Manpower (Nationwide)	Foreign Supporter
Anti-Syrian			
Lebanese Forces (Samir Ja Ja)	Christian	5,000-8,500	Israel
Progressive Socialist Party (Walid Junblatt)	Mostly Druze	5,000-6,000	USSR
Palestinian groups (Yasir Arafat)	Palestinian	3,500-5,000	
Lebanese Communist Party (George Hawi)	Mixed	500-750	USSR
Murabitun (Ibrahim Qulayat)	Sunni Muslim	250-500	Libya
Neutral			
Hizballah (Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah)	Shia Muslim	5,000-7,500	Iran
Abu Nidal (Sabri al-Banna)	Palestinian	100	Syria
Pro-Syrian			
Lebanese Army 6th Brigade	Mostly Shia Muslim	3,500	Syria
Amal (Nabih Barri)	Shia Muslim	5,000-8,500	Syria

Ja Ja's challenge adds an unpredictable element to militia politics, mainly through his willingness to use violence against both Christian and Muslim targets to achieve his goals. Although he is likely to seek to limit the political fallout of his actions, we believe his lifelong dedication to the use of violence could provoke a major crisis in Beirut, perhaps splitting the Christian camp. b3

Gangsterism in West Beirut. West Beirut has become a patchwork of small areas loosely controlled by confessional or ideologically based militias and plain gangsters. The traditional dividing lines between West Beirut's sectarian neighborhoods have blurred as the clashing militia forces plunge the city deeper into anarchy. b3

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No clear winner has emerged in the struggle. Amal, Hizballah, the Palestinians, and the Druze militias are the major contenders for power. Amal has been weakened by its inconclusive war against the Palestinians; the Druze, by the Syrian deployment of troops to Beirut in February 1987. Over the last two years Hizballah has emerged as a force to be reckoned with, particularly in Beirut's southern suburbs and in neighborhoods near the Green Line—the unofficial border between Muslim and Christian Beirut. Smaller groups—often extremists—have waged successful turf battles, carving out niches for themselves.

Many fighters remain uncommitted to any single militia and sell their services to the highest bidder. [redacted] for many young militiamen fighting is a part of everyday life, as is the absence of law and order. We believe Lebanon's accelerating economic decline will encourage the dwindling middle class to emigrate or join ranks with the street fighters to survive.

The Palestinian factor further complicates West Beirut's agony. Palestinian fighters have been returning in large numbers to West Beirut since early 1986, [redacted] altering the political balance among the Muslim political factions. Palestinians living in the camps have been the targets of the pro-Syrian Amal militia. Attempts by Amal, the Syrians, and Israel to stem the flow of Palestinians into West Beirut have failed, and the Palestinian influx almost certainly contributed to Damascus's decision to deploy a small force—about 1,000 troops—to West Beirut in early July 1986. Damascus deployed another 8,000 troops to West Beirut in late February 1987 but has not entered the southern suburbs, where some 600,000 Shias live. These deployments failed to curtail Beirut's endless violence, a point brought home when US journalist Charles Glass was kidnapped in West Beirut near a Syrian checkpoint.

The Shia fundamentalists in Beirut are using their longstanding tactical alliance with the PLO to oppose Damascus [redacted]



The Druze in Beirut have allied themselves with groups that oppose the Syrian presence and the Amal militia. Even after the Syrian deployment in 1986, Druze leader Junblatt permitted the Palestinians to operate in the hills outside South Beirut, helping them ameliorate the effects of Amal's siege of the camps.



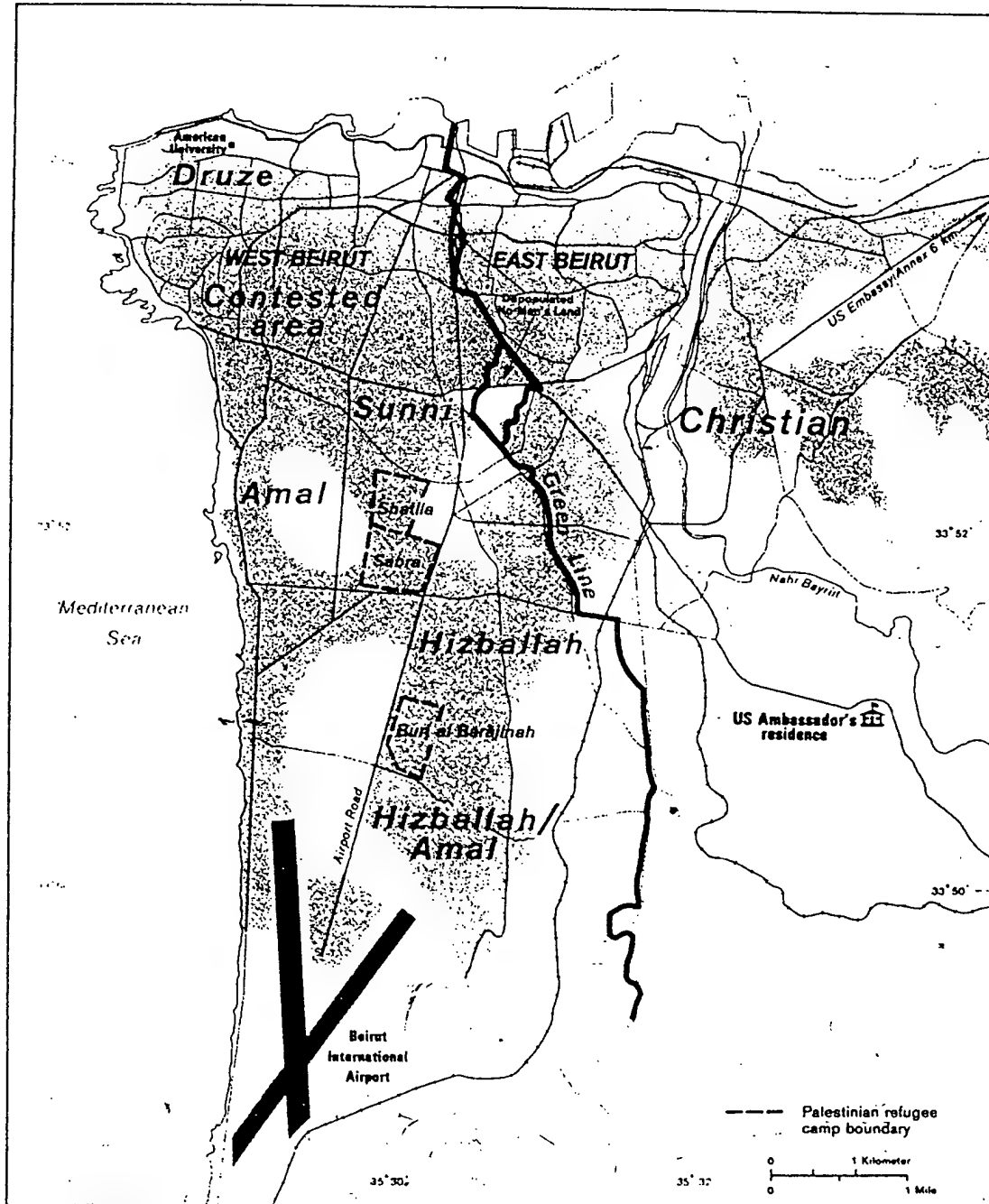
In our view, West Beirut will remain a bastion of anarchy, despite Syrian attempts to impose order. The Palestinians almost certainly will continue to cooperate with anti-Syrian forces in efforts to relieve pressure on the camps by undercutting the pro-Syrian Amal militia. Hizballah remains an obstacle to the expansion of Syrian influence and is likely to remain so. The sway of the fundamentalist group, in our view, has been sustained despite the Syrian deployment in February 1987.

Junblatt and his Progressive Socialist Party militia are some of Lebanon's ablest fighters and political strategists. Because the Druze community is so cohesive and there is no credible challenge to Junblatt's leadership, we believe there are few internal constraints on his political behavior. The geographic position of the Druze heartland between Beirut and southern Lebanon has dictated much of Junblatt's political agenda: preventing the emergence of a strong opponent on either of his flanks by exploiting short-lived alliances. We expect Junblatt to continue to work with Syria's opponents or competitors in Lebanon—the Palestinians, Hizballah, the Iranians, and southern Christians—while he undercuts the Christian government and seeks to weaken Syrian influence over his behavior.

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Figure 4
Militia-Controlled Neighborhoods in Beirut



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South Lebanon: Explosively Unstable

The continuing growth of Shia extremism and the reestablishment of the Palestinian presence have led to increased violence and political instability in southern Lebanon. The complex interplay of interests among the region's players—Hizballah, Amal, the Army of South Lebanon, the Israelis, the Druze, and the Palestinians—has created a bizarre situation in which the groups that cooperate elsewhere or in attacks on Israel and its supporters in the south sometimes attack each other. **b3**

The Druze situation is a good example. The Druze would be threatened if the Shias in the south coalesced. Hizballah's dynamism and its gains against Amal have made this a dangerous possibility. **b3**

b1
b3
[REDACTED] **b3**

[REDACTED] **b3**

b1
b3
[REDACTED] **b3**

Opposing Israel. Although Hizballah's roots reach to the Bekaa Valley and West Beirut, the heart of Lebanon's Shia community—and the soul of the fundamentalist movement—is in South Lebanon. Shia leaders often refer to the region in what are (for them) particularly moving terms: "The Jabal [Amil] is the heart of the Shia," the Lebanese equivalent of "Remember the Alamo." **b3**

Shaykh Ragheb Harb, a prominent southern Shia cleric, established a Shia resistance movement in the region in 1981, according to our analysis of Lebanese accounts of opposition to the Israelis. We believe Harb maintained contact with another prominent Shia cleric from a southern family, Ayatollah Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, Hizballah's spiritual guide. Fadlallah probably was a member of the network of Shia clerics who cooperated with Harb, and most of these clerics now belong to Hizballah. Harb was killed in 1984 by a bomb—which most Lebanese believe was planted by Israeli agents—in a Shia religious shrine in the village of Ma'rakah. **b3**

Harb has become the most prominent martyr of the Hizballah movement, and mere mention of his name is tantamount to a benediction or a battle cry. He is almost always referred to in print by Lebanese Shias as the "Prince of Martyrs," and his posthumous status reflects the politics of his death. **b3**

Hizballah uses the religious status conferred by martyrdom to recruit young Shias eager to attack Israel. The group's attacks against the Army of South Lebanon and Israeli forces in Lebanon have been increasingly effective and have used growing numbers of fighters. Widely publicized assaults on pro-Israeli forces in South Lebanon have bolstered perceptions of Hizballah as spearheading resistance to the Israeli presence in Lebanon. We believe Hizballah's activism in South Lebanon has translated into important political advantages against Amal. **b3**

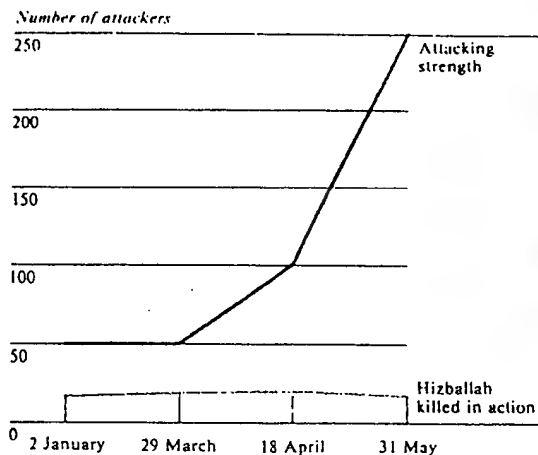
Tehran strongly assists Hizballah's efforts in South Lebanon. **b3**

The Iranian-sponsored Martyrs' Foundation provides a stipend and long-term support to the families of Shias killed in the fight against Israel. Other Iranian aid is used to provide housing for those Shias whose dwellings are destroyed by the Israelis. **b3**

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Figure 5
Hizballah Attacks on Pro-Israeli
Forces, 1 January Through 1 June 1987



Hizballah's 1987 Offensive

Hizballah's successful attack on the Army of South Lebanon near Jazzin on 31 May involved more troops than Hizballah had ever fielded and showed growing fundamentalist military strength.

Public statements by Hizballah leaders claim that the attack cracked the morale of the Army of South Lebanon and demonstrated the qualitative edge Hizballah holds over its opponents. The attack, moreover, almost certainly strengthened Hizballah against other Lebanese Shias who had argued that, because of high casualties suffered earlier, the attacks should stop.

Hizballah's other attacks in 1987, particularly one that took place just before the Arab League summit meeting in November, displayed considerable tactical skill. In the November attack fundamentalists planted landmines in likely avenues of advance before they assaulted an Army of South Lebanon strongpoint. Army of South Lebanon militiamen who were en route to reinforce the strongpoint advanced into the mined area, which caused additional casualties and further complicated the defense of the position.

Resisting the Palestinians. Despite problems on other fronts, Amal continues its war against the Palestinians in the camps near Sidon and Tyre. To control the camps, Amal leader Barri has moved a Shia military group directly under his control, called "Ansar Al Jaysh" or "Supporters of the Army," to a strategic location near Sidon.

Southern Strategy

Hizballah's operations have dashed Lebanese hopes for an Israeli withdrawal. Israeli and Army of South Lebanon retaliation created a cycle of violence that has fostered the radicalization of southern Shias. As a consequence, Amal is put in the position of either defending Israel's presence in Lebanon or supporting Hizballah in its attacks. We believe that Amal since late 1986 has reluctantly followed the fundamentalists' lead.

Despite their emotional attachment to the south, we do not believe driving the Israelis out of Lebanon is Hizballah's most pressing goal. Its operations in the south seem to be aimed as much at weakening Amal. In our view, the fundamentalists are using their struggle against the Israeli presence in Lebanon as a political weapon against their Lebanese opponents.

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Palestinian Goals in the South

Since the Israeli invasion of 1982 and the evacuation of Palestinian fighters, the PLO has been slowly reentering Lebanon. PLO leader Arafat had wanted to stay near Israel to conduct cross-border operations and to protect Palestinians within the camps. Most returning fighters, however, were first rearmed and placed in refugee camps in Beirut.

Amal's attempts to disarm these Palestinians have forced Arafat to redirect his efforts toward building up the PLO's strength in southern Lebanon. The PLO has infiltrated fighters from Cyprus and elsewhere through ports near Sidon and Tyre.

The PLO's strength, however, is likely to remain largely defensive. Arafat does not have—and is unlikely to obtain—the arms and manpower necessary to recreate a state within a state, which the PLO had in southern Lebanon before 1982.

Moreover, Arafat's guarded statements on PLO intentions in Lebanon suggest that he wants to avoid involving the PLO in local conflicts so as not to risk losing ground recovered since 1982. He appears acutely aware that the PLO cannot suffer another forced evacuation from Lebanon.

~~_____~~ **b3**
Palestinian fighters swarmed out of the Sidon camps in late 1986 and took positions overlooking the important coastal road, from which their guns and mortars could command access to the camps. Intense fighting alternated with negotiations, producing a partial withdrawal of Palestinian forces. The issue of a renewed Palestinian presence outside the camps, however, revived the fear of another "Fatahland" in the south. Timely intervention by Iranian and Lebanese Shia clerics, as well as restraint by the Palestinians, prevented a confrontation along Shia-Sunni lines. Hizballah and Amal's joint opposition to a Palestinian rebirth in southern Lebanon underscored the common interests of the southern Shias ~~_____~~ **b3**

Outlook for the South. We believe Tel Aviv has little choice but to keep using the Army of South Lebanon as a shield. The current policy of enhancing the Army of South Lebanon's capabilities through increased training or providing tactical air and artillery support inside Lebanon seems unlikely to change. ~~_____~~ **b1**
b3

~~_____~~ **b3**
We judge that Hizballah's southern strategy of undermining Amal is working. Lebanon's southern Shias are growing increasingly radical, although in 1987 Amal had significantly broader—albeit fragmented—support. Prominent clerics in the south are influential Hizballah stalwarts, and we suspect that more clerics than those currently identified as Hizballah supporters are in the fundamentalist camp. Because information about the Hizballah underground and clerical network is scant, we suspect that Hizballah inroads in the south are greater than they seem and that more Shia villages contain both Hizballah and Amal supporters than reports to date indicate. ~~_____~~ **b3**

The Shia-Palestinian struggle in the south probably will continue, but a major and sustained increase in fighting seems unlikely. The Palestinians have held their own, and they hold superior positions around Sidon. Nevertheless, we suspect they will not push too hard, if only for fear that sustained fighting will undermine Arafat's leadership and provoke a sharper reaction against the Palestinians from southern Shias and Syria ~~_____~~ **b3**

The Palestinians, Amal, Hizballah, and other players in South Lebanon could put aside their differences and cooperate in attacking Israel. In the unlikely event that these disparate groups began to coordinate their military activities, they could punch through the Army of South Lebanon and attack northern Israel. Attacks of this kind, however, almost certainly would provoke increased direct Israeli military involvement in Lebanon ~~_____~~ **b3**

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Syrian-Occupied Lebanon: Forgotten Arena

Some 10,000 Syrian troops occupy roughly half of Lebanon, stretching from just south of the Beirut-Damascus highway to Lebanon's northern border with Syria. Several militias are active in the Bekaa Valley and Tripoli areas, but militia politics in these areas is less violent than in Beirut, the Christian enclave, or South Lebanon. ~~_____~~ b1 b3 b3

The Syrian presence has brought with it a measure of order. Car bombings occur, as well as clashes and shootings, but less frequently than in other parts of Lebanon. Syrian forces usually move quickly and successfully to contain disturbances. ~~_____~~ b3

Northern Lebanon. The Islamic Unification Movement (Tawhid), a Tripoli-based Sunni fundamentalist group and the most active militia in the north, has resisted the Syrians. The result, ~~_____~~ b1 b3 ~~_____~~, has been a stern Syrian crackdown and the disappearance of whatever Tawhid supporters Syrian troops can locate. ~~_____~~ b3

We believe growth of the Islamic Unification Movement in Tripoli stemmed from the leadership's ability to translate economic and social grievances into political causes. The lower-class Muslim community was mobilized through an intricate system of support from mosques and religious centers throughout the city. Islam served as a vehicle for both military and social mobilization. In 1985 the Islamic Unification Movement briefly created a virtual city-state in Tripoli before Syria crushed it with military force. ~~_____~~ b3

In our view, the social forces that spawned the Islamic Unification Movement will help it remain an important political factor in the Tripoli area despite Syrian repression. We believe the sense of abandonment felt by the inhabitants of Tripoli as a result of the declining authority of the Lebanese Government was the primary cause for the emergence of the move-

ment. The city's geographical isolation, coupled with massive social dislocations resulting from increased unemployment, aggravated Tripoli's economic and demographic imbalance. Muslim laborers poured into the city from surrounding villages and competed for scarce job opportunities. These rustic Sunnis became the backbone of the Islamic Unification Movement, and their grievances against Syrian preferential treatment toward North Lebanon's Alawis fueled the movement's radicalism. ~~_____~~ b3

The Syrian-supported Alawis have their own militia, and it occasionally clashed with the Islamic Unification Movement. ~~_____~~ b1 b3

~~_____~~ the Arab Democratic Party represents Alawi interests in northern Lebanon, as does its militia Al Fursan. Led by Ali Id, the pro-Syrian group often acts in conjunction with Syrian forces in Lebanon. ~~_____~~ b3

Bekaa Valley. Hizballah has developed an impressive military network in the Bekaa Valley. The center of its militia training and related activity is near Ba'albakk. ~~_____~~ b1 b3

~~_____~~ b1 b3

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bl
b3
Both parties avoid allowing minor clashes to escalate into confrontations, although the Syrians often vigorously assert their position. [REDACTED]

The country's economic fiasco will almost certainly worsen, reducing the chances of a political settlement. Investment is declining as it becomes increasingly obvious that assets cannot be protected. Genuine reconstruction seems impossible. Lebanon's extensive financial and human resources at home and abroad could conceivably support economic recovery, but capital flight is worsening and the country will probably never regain its prominence as the commercial center of the Middle East. [REDACTED] b3

b3
Iranian Presence [REDACTED]

bl, b3 [REDACTED] Exporting the Islamic revolution to Lebanon is an important Iranian foreign policy goal, and Tehran uses its complex relationship with Damascus to promote its interests and to shield Hizballah from Syrian pressure. [REDACTED] b3

bl, b3 [REDACTED] the Syrians retain the upper hand in the triangular relationship between themselves, Hizballah, and Iran in the Bekaa Valley, but not by as large a margin as they once enjoyed. Syrian-imposed order is compromised by the large area Syrian forces occupy and by Hizballah's flourishing, Iranian-supported political and military network. [REDACTED] b3

bl, b3 Outlook [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Lebanon's deepening economic crisis, added to 12 years of civil war, guarantees continued political and social turbulence. The country's economic deterioration, in our view, will strengthen the groups that enjoy strong financial backing from foreign sources and will weaken those that do not. A possible consequence is the intensification of militia warfare as the militias compete for funds by attempting to expand the territory under their sway. [REDACTED] b3

bl, b3 In the short term there will be considerable pressure on Lebanese militias to sell their loyalties and services to the highest bidder. [REDACTED] Druze leader Junblatt's newfound willingness to send troops to Libya and to move closer to Hizballah, for example, reflects the results of growing economic hardship. [REDACTED] bl, b3 [REDACTED] an increased tendency toward mercenary pursuits, given the already fluid political environment, ensures that Lebanon will retain its role as principal battleground for regional conflicts. [REDACTED] b3

The presidential election scheduled for 1988 may mark a watershed. The collapse of the political compromise established in 1943 may be demonstrated dramatically. [REDACTED] b1 b3

We believe that, unlike earlier sessions, when the Syrians and Israelis could dominate the election, Lebanon's militias could obstruct the process by preventing their coreligionist delegates from attending the parliamentary session, precluding a quorum and scuttling the election. Most Lebanese politicians are aware of this dark possibility, but efforts to avert electoral paralysis may well founder on the claims to social and political justice posed by Muslim militia warlords and the unwillingness of the Christians to offer substantial political concessions. [REDACTED] b3

Lebanon's crippled economy is certain to be a major issue in the campaign. Riots have already erupted to protest deteriorating economic conditions and the plummeting exchange rate of the Lebanese pound. Child abandonment and increases in theft have increased because of the rapid breakdown of social institutions. Although the government can do little about these matters, many candidates will try to exploit issues that transcend factional boundaries. [REDACTED] b3

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b1
b3

The Christian Lebanese Forces is likely to try to disrupt the election. [REDACTED] the group intends to run its own candidate, probably Samir Ja Ja, the militia's leader. The militia candidate would run on an anti-Syrian platform and would promise to restore Maronite dominance or, failing that, to establish an independent Christian entity. [REDACTED] b3

A prolonged and violent campaign accompanied by continued economic and social deterioration is likely, threatening the collapse of the country's remaining political and economic institutions. No candidate could become president without Syrian acquiescence, but a candidate acceptable to the Syrians would provoke a walkout by Lebanese Forces-backed Christians or spark a violent showdown. Shia Amal leader Nabih Barri has stated that his group will not accept the election of another Maronite, virtually guaranteeing an electoral deadlock. [REDACTED] b3

Hizballah will be a key beneficiary of Lebanon's chaos. If prevailing political trends are a guide, Hizballah will be a major force in Lebanese militia politics. The fundamentalists have maneuvered around potentially damaging clashes with Syria and Amal, while the group's militia strength has grown. Hizballah's influence may level off in the near future, but there is little reason to believe that the fundamentalists' clout will decline dramatically. Hizballah's rival Shia militia, Amal, seems increasingly fragmented and unable to compete on even terms with the fundamentalists for the loyalty of Lebanon's Shias. [REDACTED] b3

Alternative Scenarios

Despite Lebanon's myriad woes, the Lebanese people have been remarkably resilient. Unexpected developments could prolong the lifespan of the current political system or begin to stem the tide of Shia radicalism:

- Israel could withdraw in phases from South Lebanon, undercutting the appeal of Hizballah to the southern Shias.
 - Iran could reduce its support for Hizballah, making the fundamentalists more vulnerable to the economic distress that is hampering other militias.
 - Nabih Barri could be replaced by a more charismatic figure as leader of Amal, and Amal could recover some of the ground it has lost to Hizballah.
 - Syrian President Assad could decide to crack down on Hizballah in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley. Such a move would be militarily costly for Syria but could drive Hizballah underground.
 - Walid Junblatt could vanish from the scene, throwing the Druze into disarray. This could enable the Syrians to extend their influence into the Druze heartland and encircle West Beirut and the southern suburbs.
- Furthermore, Khomeini's death could hinder Hizballah's political gains:
- The spiritual authority wielded by Iranian clerics acting on Iran's behalf would decline, almost certainly complicating relations with prominent Lebanese Shia clerics.
 - Iran could be increasingly occupied by domestic political concerns and deemphasize its support for exporting the Islamic revolution to Lebanon. [REDACTED] b3

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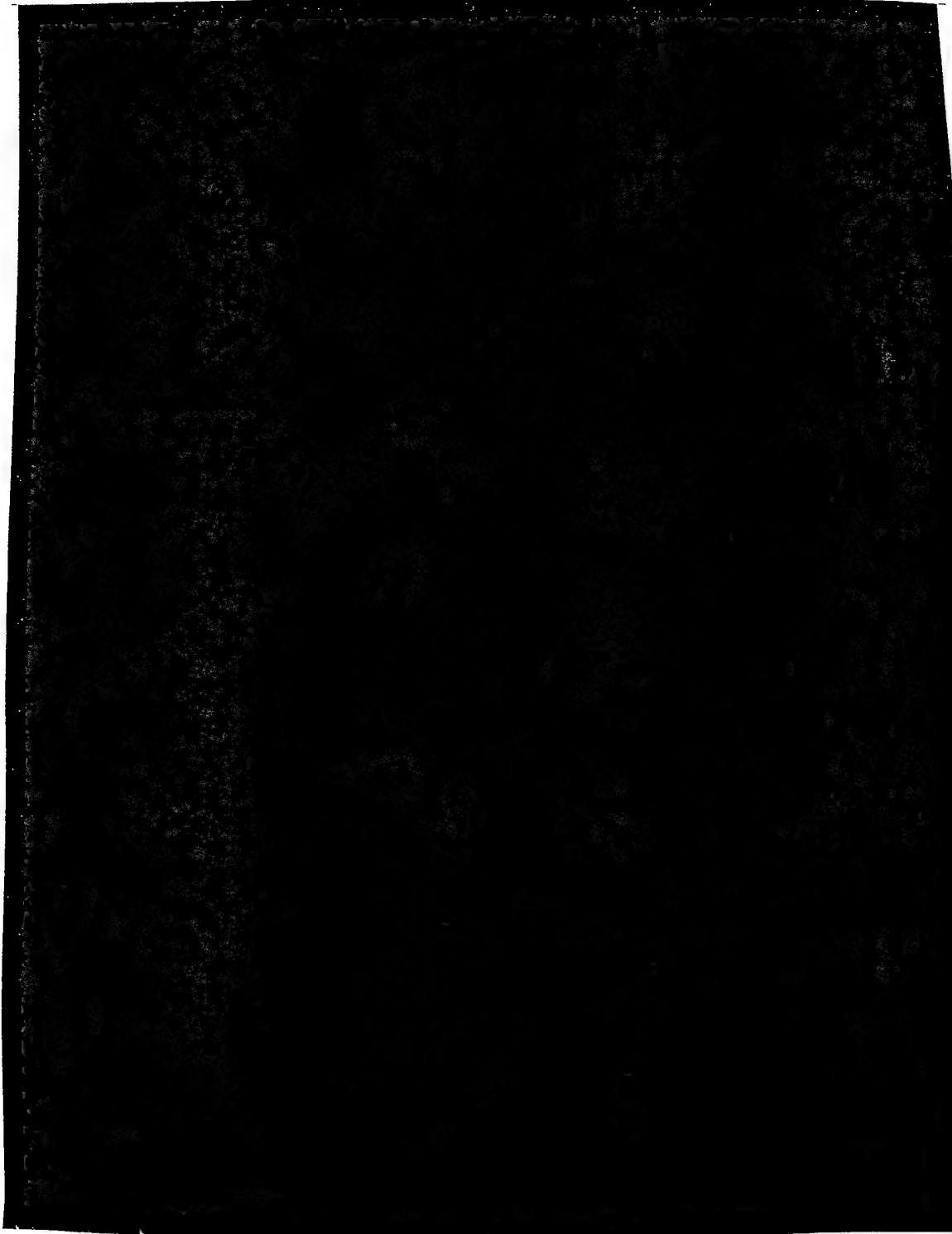
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Appendix A
Lebanon's Militias

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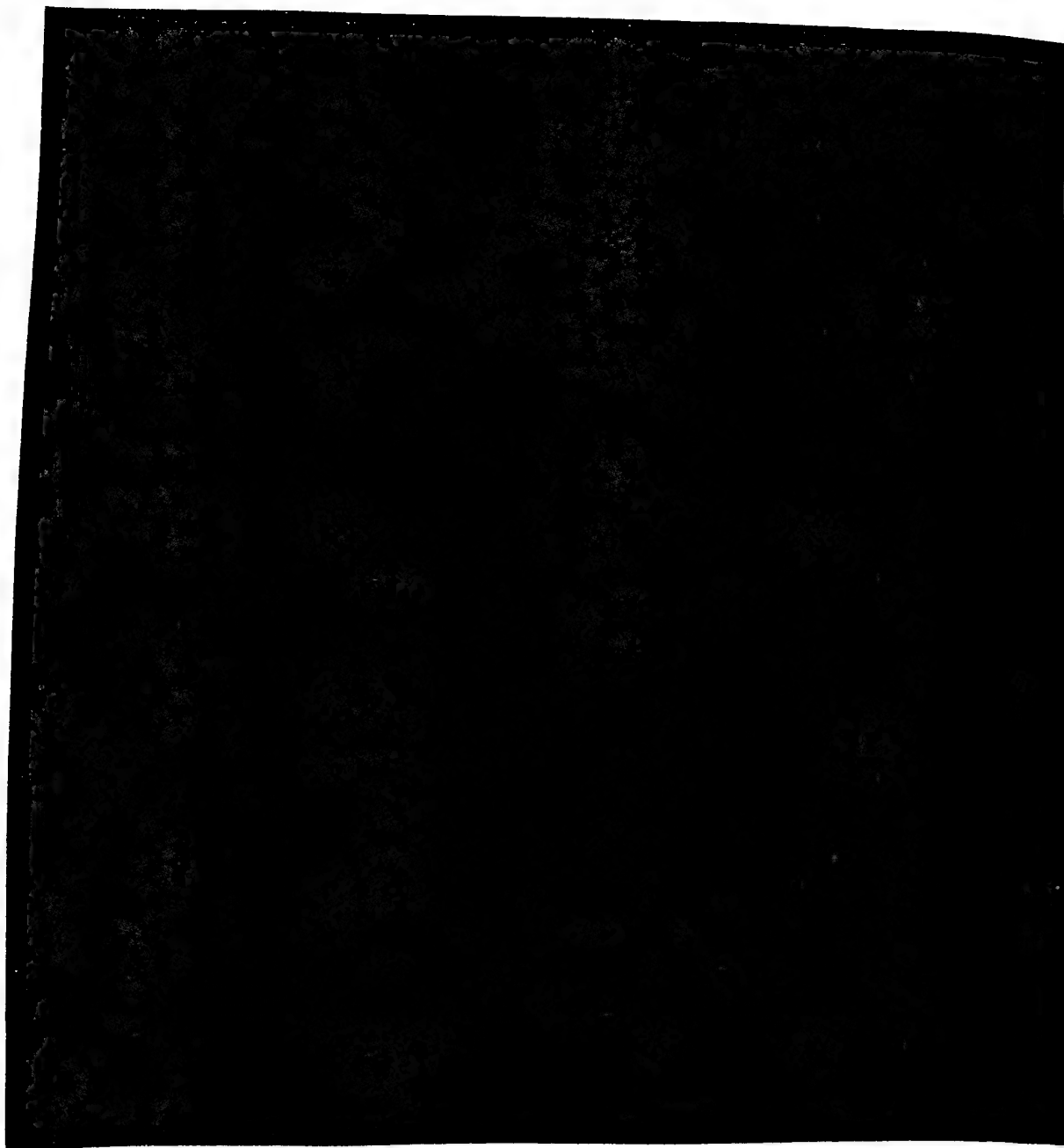
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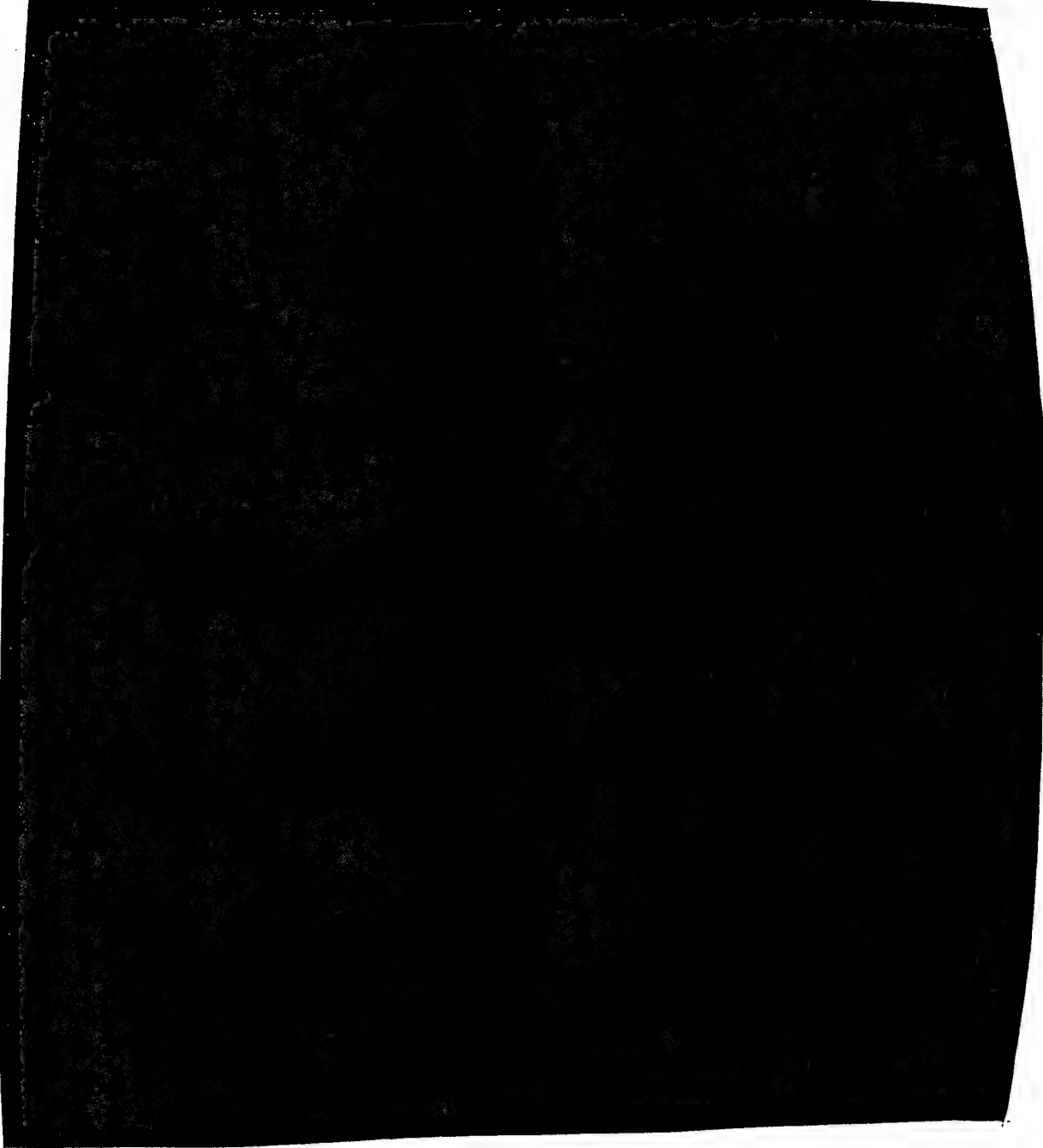
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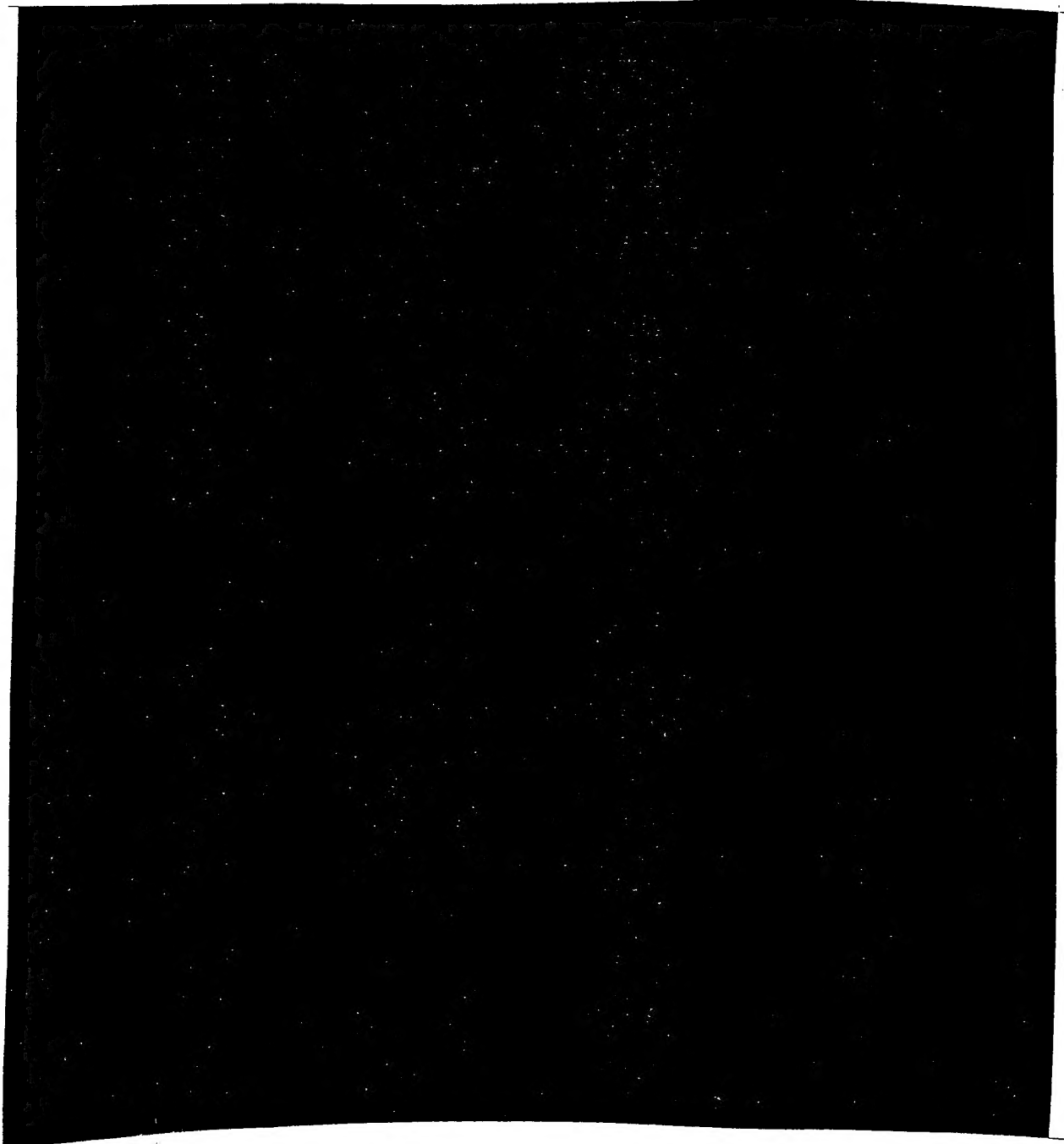
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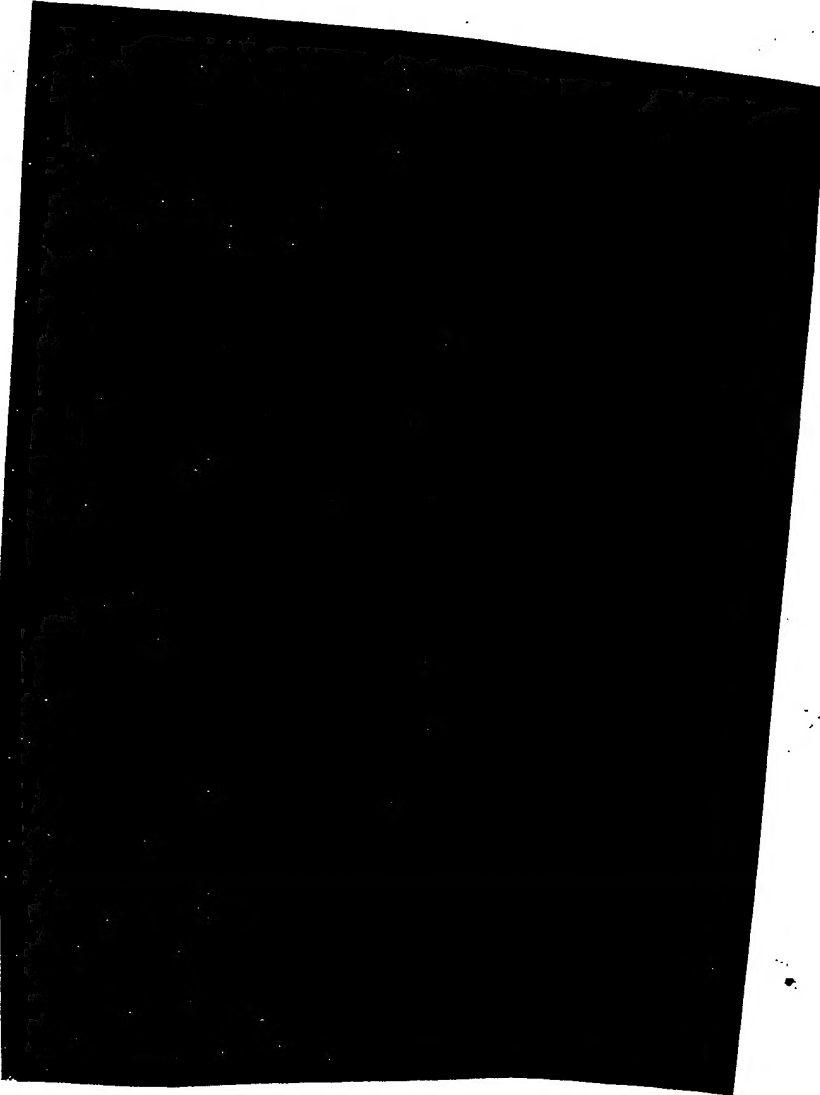
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Appendix B

Sizing Up the Militias

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As the central government's authority has waned, Lebanese politics has become a patchwork of local power struggles, particularly in Beirut. Militias have become the major factor in this complex situation because they play a dominant role in grassroots politics.

b3
Our rating of Lebanon's militias allows readers to assess the players. Because we have examined the major militias in terms of military, social, and political factors, this rating can help illustrate why some communities prosper under militia rule and others do not and why Lebanese politics grows increasingly violent.

Where Is Square One?

Several important factors must be considered before rating the militias: quality of data, measurement schemes, objectivity of measurement criteria, and the validity of the exercise as an analytical tool:

- Because the militia situation is so fluid and much of the data concerning military factors is estimative, this study rates the militias against each other rather than against an objective standard.
- We gauge the militias' fighting proficiency on the basis of combat performance, but the outcome of fighting against one militia is only a crude indicator of how one militia will perform against another. Our method was to rank Lebanon's militias by averaging the evaluations of a panel of experts.
- The goal of the exercise is to produce a scorecard of militia actors that illustrates the major factors affecting the political and military strength of major Lebanese militias.

The Evaluation Process

b3
We rated the militias on three clusters of issues: military, social, and political. The rating scheme used integers from 1 to 9, with 9 representing the "best," "largest," or "richest" and 1 representing the "worst," "smallest," or "poorest." Additional criteria to be considered or instructions to the evaluators are included as necessary.

Military factors are:

- Manpower (MP)
- Military Effectiveness (ME): Rank each militia using three criteria—weaponry, training, and presence of advisers. The militia with the "best" weapons should be ranked 9; the one with the "worst," 1. Use the same scheme for training and advisers. (The score for military effectiveness is determined by dividing the composite score by 3.)
- Leadership Effectiveness (LE): Cohesiveness and command and control. (Composite score divided by 2.)
- Motivational Factors (MF): Morale, pay, and degree of ideological indoctrination. (Composite score divided by 3.)

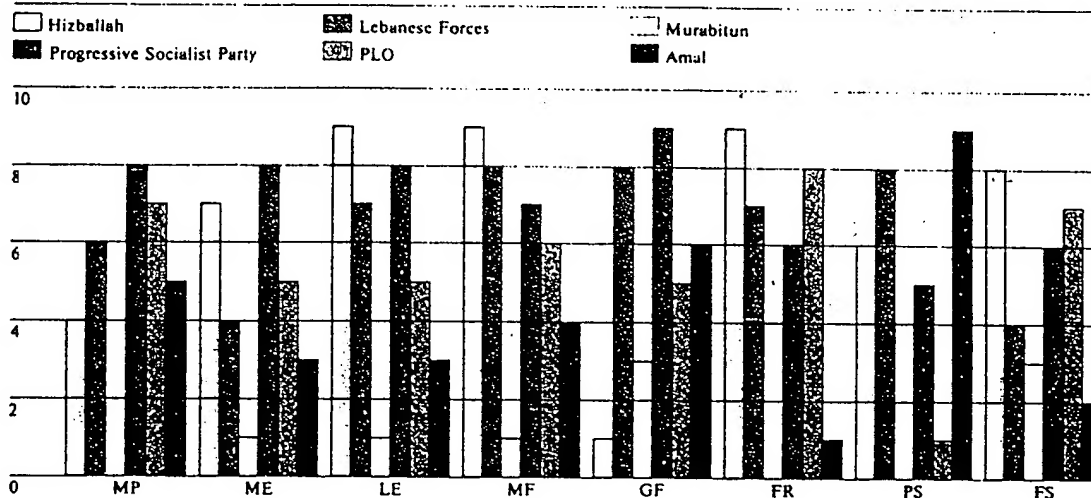
Social factors are:

- Geographic Factors (GF): Concentration (geographic) and potential for self-sufficiency. A militia with forces dispersed over several noncontiguous areas should receive a 1—it is the most dispersed. A militia that has its forces concentrated most in one area should get a 9. The defensibility of the militia's area of operations is to be considered. The militia with the highest potential to defend an economically self-sufficient canton should be ranked 9. (Composite score divided by 2.)
- Financial Resources (FR): Ability to generate funds from activities inside Lebanon or from expatriate Lebanese (this is one subcategory) and to obtain financial support from foreign governments. The militia that can get the most money from foreign patrons should be ranked 9. The militia that has the best fundraising from Lebanese sources (both domestic and expatriate) should be ranked 9. (Composite score divided by 2.)

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Figure 6
Lebanon's Major Militias



Political factors are:

- Popular Support (PS): Imagine every Lebanese could vote for his or her favored militia. The militia that would get the most votes should be ranked 9.
- Foreign Support (FS): Rank each militia in terms of the reliability of its foreign patron, the degree to which the militia relies on its patron, the effectiveness of the patron's support, and the degree to which the interests of the militia converge with those of its patron. The militia with the most reliable foreign patron should be ranked 9. The militia that relies

least on foreign support should be ranked 1. The one that relies most should be ranked 1. Since militia politics in Lebanon is fluid, gauging the durability of the militia-patron relationship is important. We believe that the most durable relationship will be one in which the militia and the patron have common political interests. The least durable one will be when the militia and the patron have divergent interests—in other words, a tactical alliance. Therefore, the militia with the best fit of interests with its patron should be ranked 9; the one with the worst fit, 1. (Composite score divided by 4.)

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